Claims

I claim:

1.   A travel product inventory and rate management system comprising:

a bulk inventory and rate database containing inventory and rate information related to a plurality of individual travel products provided by a plurality of travel product suppliers;

a component bundler, the component bundler selectively choosing at least two of the plurality of individual travel products and combining them into a vacation package in response to appropriate parameters or input from a vacation package seller; and

an interface between the travel product inventory and rate management system and the vacation package seller such that the vacation package seller is provided with the ability to select a vacation package combined by the component bundler.

2.   The travel product and inventory rate management system of claim 1 wherein the component bundler is a dynamic component bundler that chooses the at least two of the plurality of individual travel components and combines them into the vacation package at the time when the vacation package seller selects the vacation package.

3.   The travel product and inventory rate management system of claim 1 wherein the component bundler chooses the at least two of the plurality of individual travel components and combines them into the vacation package prior to the time when the vacation package seller selects the vacation package.

4.   The travel product inventory and rate management system of claim 1 further comprising a content services module, the content services module containing at least one database of content information for at least one of the plurality of individual travel components, the content information provided to the at least one database by the travel product supplier

supplying the at least one of the plurality of individual travel components, the content service module accessible by the vacation package seller such that it can review the content information.

5.   The travel product inventory and rate management system of claim 4 further comprising a customer services module, the customer services module including subcomponents allowing the vacation package seller to reserve the vacation package through the interface.

6.   The travel product inventory and rate management system of claim 5 further comprising an accounting services module, the accounting services module managing payments made by the vacation package seller to be directed to the travel product supplier providing the individual travel components.

7.   The travel product inventory and rate management system of claim 6 further comprising a marketing data management module, the marketing data management module including at least one database of marketing information related to the selection of vacation packages by vacation package sellers and providing management and analysis of the database of marketing information to the vacation package seller.

8.   The travel product inventory and rate management system of claim 6 further comprising a marketing data management module, the marketing data management module including at least one database of marketing information related to the provision of individual travel components by travel product suppliers and providing management and analysis of the database of marketing information to the travel product suppliers.

9.   A method of managing an inventory of travel products comprising the following steps:

providing a bulk inventory and rate database as part of an inventory and rate management system;

loading the bulk inventory and rate database with inventory and rate information for a

plurality of individual travel products provided by a plurality of travel product suppliers;

selectively choosing and bundling at least two of the plurality of individual travel

products into a vacation package; and

5   selecting the vacation package through an interface between a vacation package seller and

the inventory and rate management system.

10.   The method of claim 9 wherein the step of selectively choosing and bundling at

least two of the plurality of individual travel products into a vacation package is performed by a

dynamic component bundler at the time when the vacation package seller performs the step of

10   selecting the vacation package.

11.   The method of claim 9 wherein the step of selectively choosing and bundling at

least two of the plurality of individual travel products into a vacation package is performed by a

component bundler prior to the time when the vacation package seller performs the step of

selecting the vacation package.

12.   The method of claim 9 further comprising the steps of providing a customer

15   services module within the inventory and rate management system with content for features of at

least one of the plurality of individual travel components and allowing the vacation package

seller to access the content through the interface.

13.   The method of claim 12 further comprising the step of providing a customer

20   services module within the inventory and rate management system allowing the vacation package

seller to book the vacation package through the interface.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of providing an accounting services module within the inventory and rate management system that manages the payment of the travel product supplier by the vacation package seller.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising the steps of loading a marketing data management module with marketing information and providing access to the marketing information to at least one of the plurality of travel product suppliers.

16. A method of distributing a vacation package to a vacation package seller comprising the following steps:

providing an inventory and rate management system including a bulk inventory and rate database, the bulk inventory and rate database containing inventory and rate information related to a plurality of individual travel products supplied by a plurality of travel product suppliers;

combining at least two of the plurality of individual travel products supplied by a plurality of travel product suppliers into the vacation package; and

selectively accessing the vacation package through an interface between a vacation package seller and the inventory and rate management system.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of loading the bulk inventory and rate database with inventory and rate information related to the travel products supplied by each of the plurality of travel product suppliers.

18. The method of claim 16 wherein the step of compiling at least two of the plurality of individual travel products into a vacation package is performed by a dynamic component bundler at the time when the vacation package seller accesses the vacation package through the interface.

19.   The method of claim 16 wherein the step of compiling at least two of the plurality of individual travel products into a vacation package is performed by a component bundler prior to the time when the vacation package seller accesses the vacation package through the interface.

5   20.   The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of reserving the vacation package through the interface to the inventory and rate management system.